I: Gordon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 ART Khasi ART

which are not found usually in the people of India. Boys not above manual labour, and even the Khasi clerk in the Government offices is quite ready to take his turn at the hoe in his potato garden. The men make excellent cloth-weavers and carpenters, and are ready to learn fancy carpentry and mechanical work. They are inveterate chewers of betel and the pan leaf (when they can get the latter), both men, women, and children; distances in the interior being often measured by the number of betel-nuts that are usually chewed on a journey. They are not addicted usually to the use of opium or other intoxicating drugs. They are, however, hard drinkers, and consume large quantities of spirit distilled from rice or millet. Rice beer is also manufactured; this is used not only as a beverage, but also for ceremonial purposes. Spirit drinking is confined more to the inhabitants of the high plateaux and to the people of the War country, the Bhois and Lyngams being content to partake of rice beer. The Mikirs who inhabit what is known as the "Bhoi" country, lying to the north of the district, consume a good deal of opium, but it must be remembered that they reside in a malarious *terai* country, and that the use of opium, or some other prophylactic, is probably beneficial as a preventive of fever. The Khasis, like other people of Indo-Chinese origin, are much addicted to gambling. The people, and especially those who inhabit the War country, are fond of litigation. Col. Rivet remarks, "As regards truthfulness the people do not excel, for they rarely speak the truth unless to suit their own interests." Col. Rivet might have confined this observation to the people who live in the larger centres of population, or who have been much in contact with the denizens of the plain. The inhabitants of the far interior are, as a rule, simple and straightforward people, and are quite as truthful and honest as peasants one meets in other countries. My impression is that the Khasis are not less truthful certainly than other Indian communities. McCosh, writing in 1837, speaks well of the Khasis. The following is his opinion of them:—"They are a powerful, athletic race of men, rather below the middle size, with a manliness of gait and demeanour. They are fond of their mountains, and look down with contempt upon the degenerate race of the

[this Khasi — Angul]

SECTION IV.

RELIGION.

GENERAL CHARACTER OF POPULAR BELIEFS.

The Khasis have a vague belief in a God the Creator, U Blei 776
Kynthew, although this deity, owing, no doubt, to the
influence of the matriarchate, is frequently given the attributes
of the feminine gender, cf., *Ka lei Synshar*. The Khasis
cannot, however, be said to worship the Supreme God, although
it is true that they sometimes invoke him when surviving and
in times of trouble. The religion of the Khasis may be 771
described as animism or spirit-worship, or rather, the pro- 782
pitiation of spirits both good and evil on certain occasions, 791
principally in times of trouble. The propitiation of these 783
spirits is carried out either by priests (*lyngdoh*), or by old men
well versed in the arts of necromancy, and as the *lyngdoh* or wise
men deals with good as well as evil spirits, and, as often as not,
with the good spirits of ancestors, the propitiation of these
spirits may be said to partake of the nature of Shamanism. A 769
very prominent feature of the Khasi beliefs is the propitiation
of ancestors; but this will be described separately. There is a 775
vague belief amongst the Khasis of a future state. It is 776
believed that the spirits of the dead, whose funeral ceremonies 769
have been duly performed, go to the heaven or garden of God,
where there are groves of betel-nut trees; hence the ex-
pression for the departed, *ubo iom kwai ha ding u blei* (he who is
eating betel-nut in God's house), the idea of supreme happiness
to the Khasi being to eat betel-nut uninterruptedly. The 775
spirits of those whose funeral ceremonies have not been duly 769
performed are believed to take the forms of animals, birds, or

of the Khasi.

Just as the Khasi are unable to explain how man fell into sin, so they also cannot explain why the rooster appears as mediator between god and man. The Khasi tradition relates of the rooster: u khun ka blei uba kit ryndang ba shah ryndang na ka kynta jong nga u briu, i.e. he who, as son of the goddess, gives his life for man, thus expiating sin through sacrifice and reconciling god.

The Khasi believe in another world and their attention is directed towards the comfort of the spirits of the dead. One of the main tasks is to give them nourishment (ai ban), which must be done, since the welfare of the living depends on the welfare of the dead. For example, if one can no longer get the corpse of the deceased because it is in a foreign country or has been consumed by wild animals, one takes his clothes at the very least and carries out the burial ceremonies with these. For only such spirits, whose burial ceremonies were performed according to usage and custom, can participate in chewing betel nuts in the garden (in the house) of god, whereas the others must wander around on earth [109] or must continue living in insects, birds, and other animals. They do not believe in hell (in the Christian sense). The greatest felicity [27K] for a Khasi is "to chew betel nuts perpetually." Therefore they conceive of heaven as the dwelling (garden or house) of god, in which only betel nuts are chewed: uba bam kwai ha iing u blei (he who chews betel nuts in the house of god).

[116] This cult of spirits, which relates to deceased relatives, is mixed with the ancestor cult. Thus the first great-grandmother of each sib (jaid) becomes a goddess (ka jaubei) and the first great-grandfather of the sib a god (u thaulang).

773 gold and silver, of gilded beads alternating
772 with real beads of coral. The women and girls also take some light refreshments along. They take care of the necessary pauses for quais (betel nuts) and smoking, for the Khasi are never in a hurry. Several coolies, who accompany the procession, carry the necessary utensils for the sacrifices on their backs in waterproof woven baskets (ka shang) with forehead straps (u star) woven of bamboo, while other coolies lead the living animals to be sacrificed: a goat and a rooster.

When everything is ready, a little band, consisting usually of only a flute player (ka 'tangmuri) and one or two drummers (kaing), begins to play and the procession moves up the mountain dancing. It proceeds slowly. From time
• 774] to time everybody rests and the coconut pipe (ka jingdih duna) is passed from mouth to mouth. After a bite of betel nut (quai) has been taken, the procession moves on again dancing until the top of the mountain is reached. The Khasi must be known and admired because of the quietness and cheerfulness with which they do everything. There is no hurrying and haste, no rushing back and forth and no forgetting of anything. They give themselves time for everything and therefore succeed in what they attempt.

Hopping, mincing, and skipping they reach the top. If there are Khasi oaks there, the ones who have arrived break off leaves from them and strew them on the ground. Otherwise the Khasi oak leaves are brought along from home so that they can be strewn on the ground on the top of the mountain. This makes the ground holy and consecrated to the spirits. The men now put aside the swords and the dancing brush. They begin to prepare the first ceremonial sacrifice

laden themselves with more than 60 to 65 pounds.

Many Khasi have to start during the afternoon because of the great distance to the market. They spend the night with acquaintances. In the dark [illegible] they march by torch light. The torches consist of several igre, i.e., very thin bamboo tube, saturated with petroleum and lighted. Or a large bamboo tube is filled with cloth that has been saturated in petroleum. The burning torches are swung in circles while the Khasi march so that only a glow is provided, but this prevents the torches from going out. The glow is quite sufficient for giving enough light for the road (foot path).

[274] Betel nuts are chewed (4) all the way and water pipes are smoked during the rests.

4. The length of the road is also measured in "betel nuts."

b) The Market Place. It is not possible to talk about a definite place where the Khasi usually hold the market. This varies considerably according to the region. First of all the place chosen for the market lies outside the village. By preference they hold their markets on high ground or some such safe place. A place that has once been chosen remains the market place for that particular village. The market place is often found very close to the memorial stones, just as if the spirits of the ancestors honored there should offer aid and protection to the visitors to the market. On the southern slopes of the Khasi Mountains the market is often held on the bank of a river, for the reason that the Khasi come to these markets in boats. The market place in Nongkhlaw is quite isolated. Also the one in

9: Gurdon G-3 (no date) 1904 AS? Khasi AS?

[p. 81]

JOURNAL

OF THE

ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL.

Vol. LXXIII. Part III.—ANTHROPOLOGY AND COGNATE SUBJECTS.

No. 4.—1904.

101 *Note on the Khasis, Syntengs, and allied Tribes, inhabiting the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District in Assam.*—By Major P. R. T. Gurdon, *Superintendent of Ethnography in Assam.* (With plates III—IV).

[Read 3rd August, 1904.]

142 1. *Physical characteristics.*—The men are seldom tall; they are generally well made, and possess great strength of limb,—of leg in particular. Their features show a resemblance to those of the Japanese; their complexions are fair, noses flat, lips thick, and eyes very frequently obliquely cut. The women are good-looking, of a brown type, and are cheerful and pleasant-mannered. Children are sometimes exceedingly pretty. Khasis are inveterate chewers of *pán*,—both men, women, and children; the distances from place to place being measured by the number of betel-nuts that can be chewed on the journey. The hair of the males is shaved above the forehead pretty high up, and the remainder is gathered into a knot at the back of the head. Very few 291 Khasis have much hair about the face. Both Khasis and Syntengs wear the sleeveless coat (*jympphong*) loin-cloth, *jain siang* (a kind of

H. McCormack G.B.3 (1914-1918) War
[P. 68A] MF Khasi MF

more and chemical fertilizers. Both local land and tillables are cultivated in the same local techniques. [illegible] Khasi gardens are fashioned with walkways between beds are constructed within the gardens and allowed to dry. The beds are loosened slowly and the other spread over the soil, and finally the soil is sown, either broadcast or sown with the aid of the typical Khasi hoe. The soldier part of the cultivation requires a weeding cost, and Khasis often double crop as well. Fruits has long been found in the [illegible], in parts of Jaintia and Khasi, the only places where the grow a brand. Nowadays paddy is more and more seen in the uplands, together with a simple terracing and irrigation technology. Many upland Khasis have house gardens in which they raise a wide variety of vegetables, including pumpkins, cabbage, radishes, sweet potatoes, eggplants, and many others. Important crops in Khasi country are paddy rice for consumption, cotton, betelnuts and pineapples, in N.se. they are betel nut, pan leaf, oranges, and sugar cane. Fishing and hunting. Fishing is done by processing streams, but this is a subsistence activity only in the southern foothills. Hunting was formerly by bow and arrow or by traps, including spring guns and pitfalls, but was always primarily a sport. [illegible] Gathering. Khasis once gathered about 100 species of wild plants, most of them for food, but some for medicine. Today villagers still gather food plants, but there is no real dependence on gathering. Medicinal plants continue to be very important. Domestic animals. Cows, goats, pigs, and cattle are bred both for meat and sacrifice. Milk was formerly not utilized, but is now in popular that specialists keep herds of milk cows. Pigs are used as village scavengers, but some also receive prepared food. Cattle and goats [illegible] herds in the hills during the winter, but are herded by a communally hired herdsboy during the agricultural season. Most households keep chickens, primarily for their eggs, and a few keep ducks. A few horses are also seen. Dogs are partials, except for hunting dogs. Cats are popular. Food and attendance. The staple food of Khasis is boiled rice, together with the dried fish which is imported from Sylhet. Broiled beef, pork, and chicken are relished, but beyond the rarest of meat. Meals are taken twice a day, in the morning and evening, although farmers also take a midday meal in the field, and others may take tea and cold sweet potatoes or rice bread. Certain foods are taboo to certain sibs. Stimulants are extremely common, especially betel nut, which is often accompanied by a bit of tobacco. Tobacco is also smoked as cigarettes and in hookah and other pipes. Every village has one or more household taverns, where distilled rice whisky is cooked and sold by the glass and by the bottle. Imported opium had spread widely in the mulberries Khasi country, but controls instituted in the 1960s have been fairly successful. All stimulants were once taken by men, women, and

241
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

17: Banerjee E-5 (1955) 1962 AR7 Khasi AR7
Smit

objects are stored while that of the west (kyntam blang) was meant exclusively for sacrificial goats. There is a very big circular courtyard in front of the building where the members of the royal family as also other boys and spinsters hold a ritual dance. The function is always held during the moonlit period of May or June and the actual dates are fixed in consultation with the Chief priest (*Sokhlet*) in such a way that the first day—*Pomtiah** always coincides with the market day of Shillong Chota Bazar. The dates of the festival is then communicated to the in-charge of different units of his territory, through a wooden stick '*kyrwah*' having a few knots of cane-strips, as a form of summons for attending the festival for five days at Smit along with subjects under their jurisdiction.

Important Participant

The responsibility of performing this ritual rests on the High-priestess (*Ka Siem Sad*) who is succeeded by her eldest daughter. Different ritual objects are procured by her, well in advance and it is obligatory on her part to join the ceremonial dancing, in which her daughter may also officiate on her behalf. U Shillong is worshipped by the chief priest while the other ancestors are invoked by lesser priests. The musicians (*Dhulia*) besides their normal duties, take part in the worship of the ancestors and they are presented with silk turban, jacket, cloth, by the ruling family for the services rendered during the festival. The *Siem* has no especial role except to supervise and evoke U Shillong for the welfare of the community. He is required to perform certain sacrifices, failing which his heir-apparent (*Siem kynnah*) does the same. He along with his sister (High priestess) abstain from taking rice during the period of celebration presumably to observe the sanctity of this festival as also to ensure the successful conclusion of the function.

Ritual Materials

The festival derives its name from the sacrifice of a large number of goats some of which were supplied from the State fund and from different units of the territory. Formerly at least fifty goats were required and each unit had a specific allotment but owing to the economic difficulty that the Khasi are experiencing, the number of goats sacrificed hardly exceeds twenty-five. The goats collected from the different units, are presented to the Chief at the midnight of the third day. Rice-beer, dried fish, fermented-rice, betel leaves together with nuts are also important ritual objects in this celebration.

Description of the Festival

The commencement of the festival was marked by the distribution of dried fish (*tuit dokha*) to the persons assembled on the occasion, in the evening of *Pomtiah* (*i.e.* 21st June, 1957). This was followed by the dropping of rice-beer by the Chief priest over the five pieces of central hall known as *Ka mih-ka shor*

*A week consists of eight days in Khasi Calendar the names are according to the places where markets are held in Khasi Hills.

Name	Market
1. Pomtiah	Shillong Chota Bazar.
2. Umiet	Cherrapunjee.
3. Tre-dok	Shillong Iewduh Bazar.
4. Lyngka	Sohpetbneng.
5. Nongkrem	Nongkrem.
6. Mawlong	Laitkor (Shillong).
7. Synshar	Cherrapunjee Chota Bazar.
8. Shellong	Laskhaj, Jowai.

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

428 to the sisters of his wife, or to her nearest relatives if there are no sisters. The rank and titles of a deceased male descend to his brother; when no brother exists, then to the male children of his mother's sisters (maternal aunts); should the maternal aunts have no male children living at the time, then to the eldest male child of his sisters. When no relatives are to be found, the property of the deceased goes to the ruler of the country; or if a man dies leaving no relative other than wife and children, *i.e.* no relatives on the mother's side, the property in this case also goes to the ruler, who, as the wife and children cannot preserve the ashes of the deceased, takes charge of them, and for so doing takes all the property also. With regard to the inhabitants of the Lower Hills at Shillá, the custom as to succession is as follows:—Property belonging to a subject of Shillá is divided into two classes—(1) Property inherited from ancestors, which descends to the nearest of kin or to the relative of a deceased person who can perform his obsequies. (2) Property acquired during the lifetime of the holder, which is inherited by the children, whose duty it is to provide for the maintenance of their mother until she re-marries or dies."

434 465 MATERIAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.—The Khásis and the Syntengs are as a people prosperous. Common labourers, if adult males, can earn wages as high as one shilling per diem, and adult females as high as eightpence. The dwellings of the well-to-do 342 classes are generally constructed of masonry, with thatched roof and 352 plank floor, and divided into two or three rooms. The furniture consists of a bedstead (*ideiphli*), a mat or two (*mawf*), some cooking utensils, and a few boxes. The ordinary peasants and poorer 342 184 classes construct their huts of stone, mud, or plank walls, with a thatch or cane roof. These are fitted with wooden platforms or loose planks placed on the ground to serve as beds. The food 262 of the well-to-do classes consists of rice, fish when obtainable, fowl 434 or meat, curry, vegetables, oil, hog's lard, fermented and spirituous liquor. It may be estimated that the living expenses of an average-sized household of this class would be about Rs. 25 or £2, 10s. a month, valuing the articles of consumption at *bázár* prices. An ordinary husbandman or labourer lives on rice, dry fish, occasionally a little meat, oil, or hog's lard. 276 *Pán* leaf, betel-nut, and lime are essential to the comfort of all the hill people, who are inveterate chewers of *pán*. They commence at an early age, and are rarely seen without a *pán* leaf in their mouths; the females are quite

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

disfigured from the practice. Adults will chew as many as four or five betel-nuts a day, with the usual accompaniment of *Pán* leaves. The estimated cost of maintaining an average family of the labouring class is about Rs. 8 or 16s. a month.

TOWNS: SHILLONG.—There are no towns in the usual acceptance of the word; but the chief places in the Hills, looked upon by the inhabitants as cities, are Shillong, Jowái, Cherrá Púnji, and Shellá. According to the Census of 1872, Shillong had only 1363 inhabitants, Cherrá Púnji 443, and Jowái 4502. Jowái, however, is a collection of rural hamlets, and the population of Shillong has entirely altered since the date of the Census. The latter place first became the Civil Station in 1864, in substitution for Cherrá Púnji; and when Assam was erected into an independent Province in 1874, it was selected as the permanent seat of the Local Government. The Chief-Commissioner resides there, and also the heads of all departments in the Administration. The area of the Station is 7 miles in length by 1½ to 1¾ miles in breadth. A considerable native population is already settled, and is increasing from day to day. One of the largest weekly markets is held in the *Bázár*; and with a view to facilitate access to the Station, which is the sanitarium for the Province of Assam, a cart road has recently been completed to Gauhátí on the Brahmaputra, which will tend to make the place more and more important. An excellent water supply is introduced into Shillong through an aqueduct which has its source in the neighbouring hill streams, and sanitary measures are carefully enforced. Large sums of money have annually been expended on the erection of the public buildings necessary for the offices of the administration. A printing-press has been established, from which issue all the official documents and reports of the Province. The climate is excellent, the temperature being more equable than that of any other hill station in India, and therefore admirably suited to the constitution of Europeans. There is a church at Shillong, and a chaplain on the Bengal establishment officiates both there and at Gauhátí. The cantonments were occupied in 1875 by the 43d Regiment of Assam Light Infantry, with three outposts. The strength was 9 European officers, 16 native commissioned officers, 80 non-commissioned officers, 772 fighting men, and 58 paid camp followers and non-combatants; grand total, 935. The total cost, including contingencies, was Rs. 189,190, or £18,919.

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

estates. In addition, there are a few small holdings at Jowái, in the Jáintia Hills, which have been settled, after measurement, under the Assam Settlement Rules for a term of ten years. In 1876-77 the total land revenue amounted to Rs. 223, or £22, 6s., derived from 24 estates. Other small items of revenue are derived from fisheries, forests, stamps, and excise. In 1876-77 the rent of the fishery *mahál* was Rs. 3321, or £332, 2s.; forests produced Rs. 773, or £77, 6s., of which Rs. 652 represents fees on the exportation of timber from the Khási States to the District of Kámrúp. In the same year stamps yielded Rs. 16,121, or £1612, 2s.; but this total includes the sale of postage and telegraph stamps, as well as the sum credited for service stamps. Excise produced Rs. 1216, or £121, 12s. The stamps are sold at the Treasury; there are no licensed vendors. The excise laws are applied only within the limits of the Stations of Shillong and Cherrá Púnjí, and throughout the Jáintiá Hills. There are no licensed distilleries in the District, and the free manufacture of country spirit is permitted both in the dependent States and in British territory; what is manufactured is mainly for home consumption. In 1876-77 there were in all 18 licenses in force—4 for imported spirituous and fermented liquors, 1 each for *mahúá* and *chandu*, 2 for *ganjá*, and 10 for opium. The Khásiás and Syntengs are not addicted to the use of intoxicating drugs, which is confined to the people from the plains residing on British territory.

COURTS, ETC.—In the year 1835 there were two Magisterial and Civil Courts in the District. By 1850 the number had risen to four, which continues to the present time. The maximum distance of any village from the nearest court is 65 miles, the average distance is 25 miles. In 1835 one European official was permanently stationed in the District; in 1850, two; in 1862 and 1869, again one. In the last-mentioned year the subdivision of Jowái was opened in the Jáintiá Hills; and there have since been two officers in the District, a Deputy-Commissioner at Shillong, and an Assistant at Jowái. The total number of magistrates is three. These figures, of course, are exclusive of the staff of the Local Government, which has been established at Shillong since 1874.

POLICE STATISTICS.—For police purposes, the Khásí and Jáintiá Hills are divided into the three following *thánás* or police circles, with two outposts:—(1) Shillong, with an outpost at Nongpoh; (2) Jowái; (3) Cherrá Púnjí, with an outpost at Thária-ghát, at the foot of the southern hills.

21: Ehrenfels E-4,5 (1950) 1953 AR7 Khasi AR7

on a historical past, different from that of the Khasi proper, the former having been ruled by the powerful, but somewhat Hinduised dynasty of the Jaintia Rajas until the Jaintia Wars of the British; the latter by small independent chiefs. Yet Jaintia social organization appears on the whole to preserve the matrilineal social structure clearer and to be less influenced by plains-acculturation, than that of the Khasi, though a few features of Brahmanical religious observances and also some traces of racial admixture are found in the immediate vicinity of Jowei, the former summer residence of the Jaintia Rajas. Stronger no doubt, than this influence, was that exercised by the British and non-Assamese Indians in the provincial capital Shillong since 1866. Methods of agriculture and other aspects of material civilization differ but little in the Jaintia- and Khasi plateau-areas.

The same cannot be said of both: the Wâr-Khasi and Wâr-Jaintias. Linguistically their affiliations are with the Khasi or Jaintias respectively, in the plateau-areas. Economically, however, both Wâr-groups form a separate pan-leaf cultivating unit in the little accessible steep southern slopes of the Khasi- and Jaintia Hill massif. Both Wâr-groups live in the environment of luscious tropical flora and fauna, sharply differentiated from the cool, barren plateau with its perennial winds and the heroic, if solitary beauty of its highland heaths, which forms the background of both the Khasi- and Jaintia plateau-groups.

The age of the Wâr-Khasi and -Jaintias, as one independent economic, — and two half-independent dialectical linguistic entities, is an intricate problem. The two Wâr-groups subsist on pan-leaf cultivation as a money crop, grown in the thick tree-gardens as creepers; not on food-cultivation, as do the plateau-groups, because there is insufficient space on the steep slopes, for vegetable gardens or -fields. The pan-leaf cultivators therefore depend on food, purchased from outside. The slopes seem to have been uninhabited until not long ago. Yet pan-leaf chewing is such an integral part of Khasi life, that until quite recently, and occasionally even now, a distance between two places is not measured by the number of hours used for walking, but by the number of betelnut- and pan-leaf packages, consumed on the way. Also the common benediction among Khasi expresses the wish that so and so may eat pan in the Garden of God. Yet pan-cultivation and the settlements of the Wâr-people as pan-leaf cultivators in the southern slopes seem comparatively young. Pan-cultivation on the plateau is impracticable. It is therefore possible that pan was for a long time only a much valued import article from the plains, bartered against Khasi ore and iron tools, though it is now an export article from the Wâr-country, brought to the markets of the plains, by both Wâr-Khasi and Wâr-Jaintia women and men.

According to a tradition, across which I came among the Nonglamin clan of the Nongmuker village, the ancestors of the present Wâr people were on the plateau at a time when no pan-cultivation was going on in the slopes and none of the present big estates of pan-tree gardens was yet held by their present (Wâr-) owners. A not distant ancestor of a Nonglamin clan-member who about two or three generations ago told the story to U Siang (one of